

II. PARK PURPOSES

MISSION STATEMENT FOR THE STATE PARKS SYSTEM

The North Carolina state parks system exists for the enjoyment, education, health, and inspiration of all our citizens and visitors. The mission of the state parks system is to conserve and protect representative examples of the natural beauty, ecological features and recreation resources of statewide significance; to provide outdoor recreation opportunities in a safe and healthy environment; and to provide education opportunities that promote stewardship of the state's natural heritage.

JONES LAKE STATE PARK PURPOSE STATEMENT

The 224-acre Jones Lake and the 315-acre Salters Lake have a long history of public ownership. In 1827, legislation passed the General Assembly that expressly forbid the lands covered by the waters of any lake within North Carolina from being recorded for private ownership. In 1929, the General Assembly passed legislation declaring that all lakes greater than 50 acres in size belonging to the state should never be sold but always retained for the use and benefit of all the people of the state, thus clearly indicating the public trust nature of such lands and waters.

Because of the Great Depression, during the 1930s the federal government established various conservation programs in order to create jobs. As a result, approximately 35,000 acres of submarginal farmlands and other properties in the Bladen County area, including the land around Jones and Salters lakes, were purchased. Under management of the Resettlement Administration from 1936-1939, recreational facilities were constructed at Jones Lake. In July of 1939, the state leased the federal lands and established the first North Carolina state park for Negroes that included Jones and Salters lakes. After civil rights advances, the park became fully integrated in 1966. In October of 1954, the federal government gave the land that was being leased to the state. The deed requires that the land be used for public purposes.

Carolina bays are geological formations that are found in the loose, unconsolidated sands that form a cover within the Atlantic Coastal Plain, with the greatest concentration of Carolina bays in Bladen County. Their origin has long been a matter of speculation and debate. Carolina bays are shallow, oval depressions oriented in a southeast-northwest direction. Jones and Salters lakes are classic examples of water-filled Carolina bays. Both bays have a shallow bottom with the deepest point southeast of the bay's center. Both have a raised sand rim, best developed at the southeast end. The shorelines vary from sand to peat. Peat deposits also surround the lakes and fill the non-lake remainder of the bays. The term "bay," in this case, refers to the distinctive vegetation – such as loblolly bay – that slowly fills these depressions. Only a few bays still contain water, as most have filled naturally with sediment and vegetation.

The park's outstanding biologic resources include high quality aquatic and shoreline communities typical of bay lakes, such as Xeric Sandhill Scrub, Wet Pine Flatwoods, Pond Pine Woodland, High and Low Pocosin, Atlantic White Cedar Forest, and Natural Lake Shoreline. The Jones Lake Registered Natural Heritage Area includes almost the entire park, including Jones and Salters lakes. Species of special interest include white wicky (*Kalmia cuneata*) and red-cockaded woodpecker (*Picoides borealis*).

Jones Lake State Park is an important regional recreation resource. The park offers a peaceful, natural setting for varied recreational activities such as swimming, hiking, camping, picnicking, fishing, boating and nature study. The primary interpretive theme focuses on the Carolina bays. Recreational activities are appropriately limited to preserve the quality of the recreational experience and to protect the park's outstanding natural resources. Park development undertaken with federal Land and Water Conservation Fund assistance requires that the park be retained and used for public outdoor recreation purposes.

Jones Lake State Park offers exceptional scenic vistas of Jones and Salters lakes and their largely undeveloped shorelines. The broad expanses of tea colored water, the sand lake rims, and the dense bay forests are in stark contrast to one another. In places, beautiful majestic pond cypress trees hung with Spanish moss line the shore or grow in the shallow water. Trails wander through major natural communities of Carolina bays, offering opportunities to walk through and view pine forests, densely vegetated bog areas of Carolina bays, and also view lovely lakeside flora.

Jones Lake State Park exists so that its valuable geological, biological, recreational and scenic resources can be protected and because of the value of Jones and Salters lakes as public trust resources. The Division of Parks and Recreation is charged with preserving these resources and providing park experiences that promote pride in and understanding of North Carolina's natural heritage.

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